PA 26-148—sSB 457
Environment Committee
Judiciary Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S BOTTLE BILL

SUMMARY: This act makes changes to the state's beverage container redemption law ("bottle bill"). (The state's bottle bill generally requires a deposit to be charged on each beverage container at the time of purchase, which is then refunded to the consumer when it is redeemed at a retailer or redemption center.) Principally, the act:

1. more broadly prohibits collecting or charging a refund value on beverage containers not purchased in Connecticut and makes willful, high-volume violations a class A or B misdemeanor or class D felony, depending on the volume of containers; and
2. requires the reduced handling fees for certain redemption centers imposed under PA 26-2 to be discontinued starting on July 1, 2027, or when the redemption center uses specified scanning technology to redeem beverage containers at its facility, whichever comes first, rather than requiring that they be discontinued starting July 1, 2027, only for redemption centers that use the technology.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except the provision on redemption center handling fees is effective upon passage.

PENALTIES

Under existing law, dealers (those who engage in the sale of beverages in beverage containers in Connecticut, but not redemption centers) cannot collect or charge a refund value on containers purchased outside of Connecticut. The act sets penalties for any person who purchases containers outside of Connecticut and then willfully and in volume collects or charges a refund value on them. Specifically, willfully collecting or charging a refund value on containers purchased outside of Connecticut, or directing another to do so, is subject to the following graduated penalties that vary based on the number of containers for which a refund value was collected or charged in a calendar year:

1. 5,000 to 19,999 containers is a class B misdemeanor (see Table on Penalties);
2. 20,000 to 30,999 containers is a class A misdemeanor (see Table on Penalties)
3. 40,000 or more containers is a class D felony (see Table on Penalties).

The act specifies that this does not apply to a common or contract carrier, or warehouse worker, that is lawfully transporting or storing beverage containers as merchandise. It also does not apply to the employees of those carriers or workers that act within the scope of their employment.

REDEMPTION CENTER HANDLING FEE

By law, distributors generally must pay dealers and redemption center operators, in addition to the container's refund value (the 10-cent deposit), a handling fee of at least 2.5 cents for each container of beer, hard seltzer, hard cider, or other malt beverage, and 3.5 cents for each container of mineral water, soda water, or similar carbonated soft drink or other non-carbonated beverage returned for redemption.

PA 26-2 reduces, beginning April 1, 2026, the per container handling fee paid to certain large volume redemption centers by up to one cent. The reduction applies to redemption centers that (1) annually process an average of 50 million or more beverage containers and (2) do not use automated barcode or universal product code scanning to redeem all beverage containers.

The act instead ends the reduction July 1, 2027, or when a redemption center uses that technology for redeeming all beverage containers, whichever is earlier.

Unchanged by the act, for determining if the reduction applies, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Department of Revenue Services, must confirm the average beverage container processing volume of redemption centers. Existing law requires redemption centers to quarterly report on how many containers they redeem.